



SPOJENÁ ŠKOLA
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Language Policy and Philosophy
Primary Years Programme

At Spojená škola Novohradská in Bratislava we believe that language is a tool to articulate thinking and construct meaning about the world in which we live. It permeates all areas of the curriculum and allows us to communicate our thoughts, feelings and ideas. Learning about language enables our students to appreciate the richness of language, develop a love of literature and recognize the connections between different languages.

The better developed the conceptual foundation of the students' first language, the more likely they are to develop their second language. (Carrasquillo and Rodriguez 2002).

Since learning an additional language at an early age helps our students to develop the language centres of the brain, it is crucial that students are exposed to other languages early in their education. This philosophical belief is evident in the way in which we approach the teaching and learning of language in our school.

In accordance with our School Philosophy, we want our students to become:

Inquirers – They use language as the primary medium of inquiry to learn about language and through language.

Thinkers – They use language precisely and skillfully in the context of higher level thinking. They evaluate information and search for reliable resources. They are able to analyze problem and find solution before taking action using language in various forms.

Communicators – They are confident users of oral and written language forms in a variety of situations. They express themselves confidently and creatively in their best language and also in other languages in many ways. They use polite and respectful communication in written and oral form when communication with each other or with people around them.

Courageous/Risk taker – They are willing to attempt to read, write or speak in situations where they may not feel totally competent.

Knowledgeable – They understand the internal structure of language and the various influences on its development. They have experienced a wide variety of literature. They are aware of using appropriate format and language in range of disciplines.

Principled – They are aware that language is powerful, that it can have a profound effect and that it must therefore be used responsibly. They follow the rules of acknowledgment of sources and of academic honesty.

Caring – They show responsible, caring attitudes towards the use of language and they value literature for the insight it gives into the feelings of others.

Open-Minded – They respect differences and dialects. They are aware of the use of language is an expression of bias and strive to maintain an objective stance. They are willing to grow from experience.

Balanced – They are aware of the need for an educated person to be an effective communicator. They use literature for learning and leisure.

Reflective – They reflect on their own language development in their mother-tongue and other languages. They consciously work at improving their language proficiency.

We view all members of the school community as essential contributors to the language process. We value the linguistic and cultural background of all members of the school community: teachers, students, families, administration and support staff and agree that language develops international understanding, cultural identity, personal growth and effective communication skills.

Principles of Language Learning

We believe that optimal language learning takes place when:

- Students are immersed in a whole language environment that provides a meaningful and purposeful context.
- Students are aware of the authentic reasons for what and why they are learning.
- The students are taught at their developmentally appropriate rate within a supportive learning environment and challenged to achieve their potential.
- Students receive constructive feedback in order to better reflect upon their performance and set future learning goals.
- Assessment of learning is sensitive to, and appropriate for individual needs and learning styles.
- Language is taught holistically.
- PYP programme has specific learning outcomes for strands of speaking and listening, reading and writing, and viewing and presenting appropriate to the students' level.
- Students are exposed to the inquiry-based authentic learning.

We agree that the language is the foundation for all learning. Language develops international understanding, cultural identity, personal growth and effective communication skills. It is best learnt in a positive and encouraging environment where students engage in authentic and meaningful learning experiences.

At Spojená škola Novohradská, there are two sections – the English section and the Slovak section. In the English section, the language of instruction is English and in the Slovak section the language of instruction is Slovak. The host country language is the Slovak language and every student is supported in developing their Slovak and understanding of Slovak culture.

The following apply to the English section.

Admission Criteria

Every student with acquisition of English at an EAS {Early Acquisition Stage from The English as an Additional Language Continuum} can be enrolled in the Primary Years Programme. Teachers follow student development with various assessment tools and strategies and discuss and choose procedures that would benefit child's language acquisition.

Practices

The Language of Instruction

In the Primary Years Programme, English is the Language of Instruction. Competence in English is the key to students' success in other subject areas. However, all mainstream teachers are language teachers as well; therefore they contribute to the development of students' language skills, especially those skills required in their own subject areas. Teachers also adapt their materials for those students who are not native speakers of English. Assessment criteria and rubrics are also adapted for ESL students where necessary.

Teachers should attend to student differences and thus best help individuals address their common needs. Teachers should plan their activities and assessment in the way to address three characteristics of students: readiness, interest and learning style and differentiate content (resources, process and product to help them to develop as much as possible).

Language Programmes Offered

Language A English is taught to all students in PYP, who have a high standard of English, or English is their mother tongue. (At PYP level, five lessons a week).

Language A Slovak is taught from the year 1. Lessons are scheduled four times a week, as majority of our students are native Slovaks. It follows the Slovak national curriculum.

Language B Slovak Beginners is provided for students who have no previous knowledge of Slovak in grades 1-5. It is organised twice a week at the same time as Language A Slovak and once per week is organized in the afternoon. It follows the Slovak national curriculum.

Language B Slovak Advanced is provided for students who have a little knowledge of Slovak Language in grades 3-5. It is organised twice a week at the same time as Language A Slovak. It follows the Slovak national curriculum.

Language Courses

The school supports, at an extra cost, second language instruction in German, Spanish, French and Chinese provided that eight or more students join the course.

The following apply to the Slovak section.

The language of instruction in the Slovak section is Slovak. The section follows the Slovak national curriculum. It offers the second language – English (ESL) from the first grade.

Grade 1-4, 3 lessons per week

Grade 5, 4 lessons per week

English + Slovak section

Mother tongue support in both sections

We understand that the mother tongue is central to development and maintenance of cultural identity, critical thinking, communicative and literacy skills and that it is important to develop foundational literacy skill in the mother tongue. All members of the school community are encouraged to maintain the value of their mother tongue and to value the mother tongues of others.

The majority of our students are either native Slovaks, or children of Slovak parents migrating due to job transfers. Slovak parents as well as the Slovak governing body strongly desire and requires that children learn their native language, therefore our school offers Slovak Language A in every grade 4 times per week.

The school strongly encourages all parents to continue providing instruction of their mother tongue to children, since this is vital for the development of their cognitive skills. After appropriately developing their mother tongue skills, students have attained high quality general language skills, providing a good foundation for studying all languages, including the school's language of instruction which is English. Appreciation of students' mother tongues increases their self-esteem and makes them proud of their language, country and culture.

To facilitate this, the school encourages students to use their mother tongue dictionaries for reference. The school also offers the use of classrooms, after school, to any groups of parents who would like to organise lessons with a teacher that they provide themselves.

Students are allowed and encouraged to use their mother tongue to access the curriculum for example when they share their learning and progress with their parents and other members of the community using their mother tongue.

Language Curriculum

Languages are taught by the subject teachers and language teacher specialists.

The objectives of the Language Programme are to:

- Use language to communicate effectively, accurately and appropriately.
- Explore language in meaningful contexts through a variety of technological and information resources and rich language experiences.
- Understand and utilise language in listening, speaking, reading and writing activities.
- Develop the confidence to take risks in all language experiences.
- Discover that language learning is a continuous process based on previous experiences.

- Develop an awareness of the literary tradition, its value, its position, its complexity, and its relationship to culture.
- Learn the reading and writing process simultaneously.
- Differentiation in language lessons is based on the best practice according to the standards and practices of the IB.
- Focus on the transdisciplinary nature of the language learning

At Spojená škola Novohradská, we realize that each subject has specific expectations but through the skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and visual communication in practice the subjects are interrelated, making language the major connecting element in learning across the curriculum. The school has developed its own language curriculum for English based on that of the IB PYP Scope and Sequence document. For Slovak it uses the Slovak national curriculum. In the Slovak section – English follows the Slovak national curriculum.

Assessment

Aims of Assessment.

The key to a successful assessment is that it is kept simple, manageable and transparent.

Our aim is to enable young people to read with understanding and fluency, to speak clearly and persuasively, to listen carefully and to write accurately in a manner which generates reader interest. Assessment is integral to learning. Marking should form the basis of teacher comment, although individual variation is also likely to be applied. Our assessment takes a holistic view of a student's capabilities and progress in English. Marking involves reading through work, commenting and correcting where necessary, giving feedback as required. Not all tasks carry equal weighting, nor are they considered in isolation with regards to term grades. For example spelling tests are a means of improving written work. However, the skills covered in tests of this nature (e.g. discrete grammar, spelling or punctuation tests) must be transferred successfully to extended writing tasks in order to be included in term grades. In addition to assessment by the teacher, we also wish to develop the students' ability to self-assess and to peer assess, and to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses, to set targets and work towards them. Languages are assessed in accordance with the PYP school's assessment policy.

Assessment Criteria

There are, of course, major differences between first, second and foreign language teaching. In mainstream First Language teaching we tend to focus more on writing and reading, whereas in SL/FL teaching, speaking and listening are assessed more frequently.

Assessment Tools

- factual and imaginative writing of varying length;
- reading comprehension exercises;
- summary exercises, both written and oral;
- listening tests;
- speaking assignments (prepared and impromptu);
- grammar, punctuation, vocabulary and spelling exercises;
- role play/dramatic reconstructions;

- responses to literature;
- tests and end of year exams

Methods

Writing

We do not think that every piece of work can be or should be marked as part of the formal grading process, but it is important for student motivation and teacher information that every piece of extended writing is assessed by the teacher and that students receive feedback.

Not all 'mistakes' need to be corrected. The overall quality of a piece of work is generally not affected by minor spelling errors or the occasional lapse in grammar or phrasing and over marking has a negative impact. On top of this, good writers take risks with language and this is to be encouraged. We do, however, expect to develop a high degree of accuracy in written and spoken work, and this is considered in marking and grading.

Speaking and Listening

There should be at least one formally assessed speaking task each year. Listening is an integral part of good speaking and is informally tested throughout the year.

Reading

Reading is focused on the basic competencies and strategies. We are looking for the improvement in sound recognition and gaining fluency, comprehension and confidence. It is informally tested throughout the year.

Resources

To ensure that the main structures of the language are covered in sequence and to give a basis for topic work and communication skills, a variety of texts, textbooks and materials are used to satisfy the needs of the language programme in PYP.

Students are expected to have their own English-English dictionaries for use at home, as well as bi-lingual dictionaries in their mother tongue.

English-English dictionaries for schoolwork are available at school.

Individual teachers, the PYP teachers with their coordinator and the librarian decide what books will be bought, according to topics they teach and based on didactic needs of our programmes. The head of the school and coordinators order professional development materials for the staff.

Budgeting

The school budget operates on a needs basis. The amount spent on new resources varies from year to year. Teachers and librarians order materials for the classes they teach and the library, the budget is coordinated and administered by the school administration.

Staff

All teachers of the language department are qualified language teachers with a university degree but not necessarily native speakers. All PYP core subject teachers and language teachers are qualified teachers with a university degree. Teachers plan collaboratively during our regular meetings.

Other Activities That Support Language Development

- *Learning environment*
- We have created a suitable environment, classrooms and school routines that help develop students' language skills and interest.
- *Library programme/ reading programme in the library*
 - The library is opened daily and provides the environment for weekly lessons. Students are able to borrow books from a growing number of books in the library. We also encourage kids to use culturally diverse reading material.
- *Reading Badges Programme*
 - Extra reading lists for all grades
- *Reading with parents* – parents come and read to the class in language of their choice. Children are exposed to different mother tongue languages.
- *Presentations across 2 sections, project presentations to parents* – Children present their learning outcomes across 2 sections – Slovak and English – they use English and Slovak, to parents – they use their mother tongue.
- DEAR – drop everything and read – a curricular activity encouraging students to focus on reading.

Professional development

All teachers are committed to professional development as language teachers. They cooperate and collaborate to support all aspects of the language teaching. We aim for the IB workshop for every teacher once in two years to support the understanding of language teaching as well as to support our understanding of the IB philosophy.

Responsibility for Implementation and Regular Revision

Reviewed Feb 2019
Next review June 2020

Responsibility for Implementation and Overall Regular Revision

At Spojená škola Novohradská, we acknowledge that the language policy together with programme outlines for languages are a working document and that they need to be as relevant and comprehensive as possible. They shall be revised and reviewed every two years at least according to the changes in school structure and educational research.

All teachers are responsible for implementation of the school Language Policy. The Head of the International School and Programme Coordinators are responsible for the supervision of the implementation and regular revision of the policy in each

programme as well as the all school language policy according to the students' and school's needs.

In the PYP, all teachers review the Language scope and sequence document as well as our Programme Outlines document for language teaching (based on the Language Scope and Sequence document). This ensures that the Language policy is as relevant and as comprehensive as possible. The teachers then plan collaboratively during the PYP meetings. In the MYP and DP programmes, regular subject group meetings allow staff to meet together as a teaching unit. During these meetings the teachers plan what will be taught, reflect on best practice and review the needs of certain students. Once a year, all teachers from all programmes discuss transition and progression between all three IB programmes and ensure that the programme delivery is consistent and up to date with developments in the IB programme.

This document is for a public viewing. It is displayed on the GJH website which allows all stakeholders access it.

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